

Small Group Guide: Torah in the Former Prophets

Introduction (5 minutes)

Ice Breaker: Share a time when understanding the background or beginning of a story completely changed how you understood what happened later.

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. **The Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) is foundational** - It's not just about laws, but the narrative that sets up the entire biblical story.
2. **The Former Prophets continue the Torah's plot** - Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings grammatically and narratively continue what began in Genesis through Deuteronomy.
3. **The Torah is the dictionary** - Later biblical authors use the Torah's imagery, language, and themes to communicate their messages.
4. **Literary techniques matter** - Authors use allusions, imagery, location references, and law citations to characterize people and events.
5. **The Former Prophets are an "exilic apology"** - They explain why Israel ended up in exile and point forward to the coming Messiah.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Big Picture (15 minutes)

Q1: Warren mentioned that stories have a beginning, middle, and end. Why is it dangerous to "parachute into the middle" of the biblical story without understanding what came before?

Q2: How does knowing that the Former Prophets grammatically continue the Torah narrative (with "and then" - *vayiktol*) change how you read books like Joshua or Judges?

Q3: Warren said the Former Prophets are written to "excite messianic eschatology" - to make exiles look forward to the coming Messiah. How does this purpose shape the way these books present their characters and stories?

Exploring Specific Examples (20-25 minutes)

Q4: The Spies and Shittim (Joshua 2 & Numbers 25)

- Why is it significant that the spies were sent from Shittim and went to a harlot's house?
- How does this location detail characterize the spies differently than we might assume?
- What does this teach us about paying attention to details in Scripture?

Q5: The Gibeonite Deception (Joshua 9 & Deuteronomy 7, 20)

- Without knowing Deuteronomy's laws about making covenants, how might we misread this story?
- What's ironic about the Gibeonites knowing the law better than Joshua and Israel?
- Have you ever noticed this connection before? How does it change your understanding?

Q6: Samson the Nazarite (Judges 14 & Numbers 6)

- How does knowing the Nazarite vow change how we read Samson's story?
- Why might popular culture (like action Bibles) miss the point about Samson?
- What does Samson's character teach us about religious hypocrisy?

Q7: Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1 & Deuteronomy 13)

- How does Deuteronomy 13 reframe Naomi's words to Ruth about returning to her gods?
- What's the irony of Ruth (a Moabite) being more faithful than Naomi (an Israelite)?
- How does this challenge our assumptions about who the "good guys" are?

Q8: Saul and the Donkeys (1 Samuel 9 & Genesis 49, Numbers 22-24)

- What's the significance of the donkey imagery throughout Scripture?
- How does Saul's introduction as someone who "can't find a donkey" characterize him as king?
- How does this connect to Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey?

Q9: David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12 & Genesis 3, Exodus 22)

- How does the language connect David's sin to Eve's sin in Genesis 3?
- What's ironic about David correctly interpreting the law in Nathan's parable?
- How does this show that knowing the law isn't enough?

Personal Application (15-20 minutes)

Q10: Warren compared the Torah to a "dictionary" that biblical authors use. How does this metaphor help you understand the importance of studying Genesis through Deuteronomy?

Q11: Share an example of when understanding an Old Testament passage helped you better understand something in the New Testament (or vice versa).

Q12: Psalm 1 promises blessing to those who meditate on the Torah day and night. What practical steps can you take this week to spend more time in Genesis-Deuteronomy?

Q13: The session showed how biblical authors use literary allusions (like we quote movies). Can you think of other examples in Scripture where an author is "quoting" or alluding to an earlier text?

Closing Reflection (5-10 minutes)

Read together Psalm 1:1-3

"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the Torah of the Lord. And in his Torah, he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither, and whatever he does, he prospers."

Reflection Questions:

- What would it look like for you to "delight" in the Torah?
- How can meditating on Genesis-Deuteronomy help you bear fruit in your life?

Closing Prayer

Have someone close in prayer, asking God to:

- Give the group a deeper love for all of Scripture, especially the Torah
- Open eyes to see connections throughout the biblical story
- Help members meditate on God's Word day and night
- Use this study to bear fruit in their lives